

Wycliffe made the best use of this opportunity. He formed a body of supporters among the citizens of the capital, and among the nobility of the Court he found ready listeners.¹ He passed from church to church in London and the neighbourhood, preaching everywhere what laymen had long been thinking, but had never yet heard proclaimed with such boldness, or defended with such learning and subtlety. It was impossible for the Bishops and clergy of all England, assembled in the city for Convocation, to allow their authority to be defied with such publicity, while they sat still and debated of other matters. Least of all was it possible for so proud and fierce a man as Courtenay to hear himself and his order attacked in his own diocese, and in his own churches, by an unauthorised priest from Oxford. Again Archbishop Sudbury attempted to avoid action; again his hand was forced by his subordinates.² He reluctantly consented to summon Wycliffe before him at St. Paul's.

On February 19 the Bishops assembled in the Lady Chapel behind the altar and waited for the accused to appear. The London mob crowded the whole length of the aisle, up which the prisoner had to pass from the main entrance. The personal feelings of the Londoners towards Wycliffe were not those of aversion, and a year later, they broke in on such another tribunal to rescue him from the Bishops. But London was now thinking not of Wycliffe, but of John of Gaunt. The political existence of the great city was that week in fearful danger. The ministers had, in the name of the King, introduced into Parliament then sitting at Westminster a bill framed to take the government of London out of the hands of the Mayor and put it into the hands of the King's Marshal, who was at present represented by Lord Percy. The measure was in the hands of Percy himself, and of Thomas of Woodstock, the younger brother and friend of John of Gaunt, who had just come of age, and now, for the first time, appeared in the political arena.³ If the bill had been passed, if, which was far more difficult, it had been enforced, the lives and liberties of the citizens would have been at the mercy of the ministers, the support of London

* *Chron. Ang.*, 116. *• *Ibid.* 117. * *Ibid.* 120-1.